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# Our Cuba Mission

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# OUR WORK IN CUBA.

H. F. WILLIAMS.

TWO IMPRESSIVE facts emphasize the political and religious responsibility of the United States for the people of Cuba. Our Government delivered the Island from political oppression, set up what is hoped will be a permanent government, and, therefore, we as a nation are responsible for the moral and religious welfare of the people.

A second fact is the nearness of the Island to our shores; less than a hundred miles from our mainland separates us from the mainland of Cuba.

The accessibility of the country should be remembered. It is a delightful voyage to sail from New Orleans on the steamer going direct to Havana. Another journey is via the best of railways to Tampa and across to Havana, and another route is opened by the railroad along the shore and over the sea itself to Key West, with a short water passage of six or seven hours to Havana.

From end to end the Island is seven hundred and thirty miles, the width varying from twenty-two miles in Havana Province to one hundred and sixty miles in Santiago Province. For area, look at the map of Mississippi and you have the size of Cuba, 44,164 square miles—a little less than that of Mississippi. The population is composed of Spaniards,

Negroes, Chinese and foreign white, with, as may be expected, a large number of mixed blood. The principal hold the Roman Catholic Church has is among the women. It is stated by an experienced observer that "not one in a hundred men in Cuba attend the weekly functions of the Church."

Cuba is emphatically a mission field. Romanism has not uplifted the people as a whole. The priests are almost universally corrupt, and in many ways the social conditions on the Island are deplorable. The attitude of the Roman Church toward the Protestant missionaries is expressed in a circular distributed on the island of Porto Rico as soon as the missionaries began energetic work: "To THE CATHOLICS.—Separate yourselves entirely from the Protestants and leave them in peace. By no means attend their meetings. Avoid all religious conversation. If they come to your homes speaking of salvation or religion, throw them out in the act. By no means receive their Bibles and other literature. Watch your younger children with great care that they may not attend any Protestant exercise, and that they may not receive of the Protestants either books or presents or playthings."

Perhaps the first introduction of Protestantism into Cuba was by Rev. Andrew J. McKim, who was sent to the Island in 1884. The history of systematic work on the Island began with the occupation by the United States at the close of the war with Spain. Following the guarantee of religious liberty in the constitution which went into effect in January, 1889, the denominations speedily sent missionaries to the Island. Missionaries were everywhere received with gladness and the people were ready to hear the message.

The first representative of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. (Southern) in Cuba was

Rev. A. T. Graybill, who had been sent to the Island to examine the field and report to the Executive Committee of Foreign Missions in 1890. As a result of his work churches were organized in Havana and Santa Clara. In 1895, for good reasons, the Executive Committee was compelled to suspend the work. The conditions brought about by the Spanish-American war, three years later, opened the way for resuming work in Cuba, and Rev. J. G. Hall was transferred from the Mexico Mission to Cuba in 1899. Cardenas was selected as the first point for opening a station, and the future history of our work in Cuba shows the wisdom of the choice, both in the city and the extension of the work to other of our mission stations. Mr. Hall encountered the usual opposition, but with prayer, tact and great spiritual power he won the affections of the people. In one of his letters written during his early days he said: "We have kept on in the even tenor of our way, paying no attention to what has been said against us, and I think the opposition has tended rather to create sympathy for us among the masses."

## STATION SKETCHES.

### Cardenas.

Cardenas, with a population of 25,000, is one of the most important cities in the Island of Cuba. It is the nearest port of landing to the United States. Being one of the newer cities of the Island, it is laid out with broad streets and is considered one of the healthy cities of the Island. It is situated sixty miles east of Havana. In the beginning of the work in Cardenas Mr. Hall found a valuable co-worker in Dr. W. H. Forsythe, who was stationed at that city as an army surgeon. In the early days of the work he was joined

by Mrs. Hall, Misses Janet and Edith Houston, Miss Bessinger, and Rev. R. L. Wharton. The church in Cardenas was organized with twenty members in February, 1900.

In connection with this station there is an excellent day school. A number of the young men in this school have entered, or are candidates for, the ministry.

The church is well organized, having a well attended Sunday school and Westminster League.

The orphan asylum, a municipal institution, has for its director Mr. Elmer Hubbard, an elder of our Church.

An aggressive work is carried on in the vicinity of Cardenas. In San Jose, a country town some thirty miles distant, a church has been organized. Other out-stations have regular preaching by the missionaries located at Cardenas.

### Caibarien.

Caibarien, with a population of 8,000, a town of importance on the north shore of the Island, about 150 miles by rail from Cardenas, was opened as a mission station in 1901, and in the following year a church with eleven members was organized. Notwithstanding the opposition with which the work has met in this city, as in other cities, there has been a steady growth. On account of its importance, being one of the most flourishing towns on the Island, doing a large business in sugar exportation and sponge fisheries, with a custom house, national bank and a good free school system, it is one of the best points in our Cuban Mission. The Sunday school, in connection with the church and day school, is in a flourishing condition.

REMEDIOS.

Remedios, founded in 1511, is one of the oldest towns in Cuba. It has a population of about 9,000, and is the judicial center of quite a large territory. The streets are narrow and crooked. The principal industry in this section of the country is the cultivation of tobacco and fruits. It is strongly Catholic, with three churches. Remedios is five miles from Caibarien, with a good macadamized road connecting the two cities. At Remedios we have an organized church and a flourishing Sunday school.

PLACETAS.

Placetas is a delightfully located town of about 6,000 people. It is easily reached by two hours' railroad trip from Caibarien and Remedios. The city enjoys the reputation of being the highest, and therefore the coolest, place on the Island. The work at Placetas was opened in 1909. A small group of earnest Christians has been gathered, and the day school is flourishing. The work at this station, as also at Remedios and Caibarien, is greatly crippled by the necessity of several missionaries having to retire from the field on account of ill health.

CAMAJUANI.

Some years ago a missionary was located at Camajuani, a town a short distance from Remedios. This is a very flourishing community, with a population of nearly 6,000. It is well situated, having connections with all parts of the province by good pikes and railroad. Some years ago work was opened at this important center, but on account of

the failure of the health of the missionary it was suspended. In 1910 another effort was made to open a station, but on account of the failure of the health of the wife of the missionary, the work has again been suspended.

RESULTS.

The following statement of results is taken from a report of Rev. R. L. Wharton: "Six hundred souls have been gathered into the church, three young ministers placed in the field, with four others in preparation, six central stations established, with as many more out-stations. There are three schools, effectively manned, having a combined enrollment of three hundred boys and girls. The Word of God is preached through many thousands of tracts distributed by our young people."

NEEDS.

The greatest need of the Cuban field is missionary workers. We have one of the richest sections of the Island, but it cannot be effectively worked with the present force. This Mission has suffered far beyond the average in the loss of missionaries on account of health conditions. The superior part of the Island occupied by our Mission, the accessibility of the field, the readiness of the people to hear the gospel, the stations already opened, with the out-stations, justify the strongest appeal in behalf of Cuba, both in men and women who will volunteer for the field, and in adequate financial support to provide chapels, missionary residences and schools.

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